

Main Street Committee

Formally appointed January 2001

This Main Street planning process has resulted in a shared vision for the future of Main Street Andover. The vision provides a set of aspirations toward which all efforts can be directed and which progress can be measured.

VISION

Main Street Andover is the heart of the community, the traditional and modern focus for community activity – commercial, civic, cultural, social, and residential. Its condition serves as an indicator of the health, capacity and self-regard of the entire community. Improvements to the downtown should build on its considerable functional and aesthetic strengths, and should consistently reflect and reinforce its role as the heart of Andover.

Citizens

- Main Street Andover is the primary gathering place for its citizens -- shoppers, residents, students, employees, and visitors. It is a place for everyone and should be planned and developed as an attractive, safe pedestrian environment. Its design, maintenance, regulation, and management should result in an environment that is secure, welcoming, and free of physical, cultural, and social barriers.

Character

- The identity of Main Street and the surrounding neighborhoods is founded on the character and design of its historical architecture and landscapes. They should be preserved, emphasized, and used as a primary source of downtown strength and vitality.

Commerce

- Business activity is the foundation and the strength of Andover's Main Street. Commercial uses require adequate space, facilities, and parking. Improvements to the functional infrastructure of Main Street should be continually fostered. It is vital to local businesses endurance to bring people into downtown Andover by way of Main Street. This is primarily accomplished by automobile, but also by bus, bicycle, and train. Therefore, vehicular movement should be efficient, systematic, and as trouble-free as possible.

Background and History

The impetus of the project began in the mid 1990's due to problems identified with Main Street Andover from the Shawheen area to just north of Philips Academy. Concerns include:

- ? Pavement in poor condition
- ? Traffic congestion
- ? Inefficient flow of traffic
- ? Sign and news rack clutter
- ? Unattractive lighting
- ? Lighting is not pedestrian scale
- ? Lack of sitting spaces
- ? Lack of landscaped space
- ? Need of pedestrian enhancements
- ? Roadway crossing difficulty especially for children and the elderly
- ? Drainage problems in some locations
- ? Sidewalk height fluctuates in places
- ? Sidewalks deteriorated in some places
- ? Crosswalks in poor locations
- ? Signalization is not good for pedestrians
- ? Pedestrian experience is substandard
- ? Sidewalks in some areas are not ADA compliant
- ? Some building facades are hostile to the pedestrian

- ? Some business entrances are not ADA compliant
- ? Night lighting is not adequate

To address these issues, in May 1997, Design Consultants, Inc. (DCI), submitted a proposal to the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) for state funding to improve traffic flows and increase safety along Main Street (Route 28) in Andover, Massachusetts. In November 1997, the MHD approved the project. Design Consultants, Inc. moved forward with design plans for Main Street and conducted several public hearings for public comment and submitted preliminary plans to MHD for review. MHD raised several key issues and as a result several waivers were sought by DCI to reduce the impact on the existing Main Street.

The Andover Board of Selectmen officially created the Main Street Committee (MSC) in January 2001 as an advisory body to provide a forum for local businesses, citizens, and government on matters relating to Main Street Andover beginning at Stevens Street north to Wheeler Street with a future possibility of studying the entire General Business District.

The MSC conducted its first public meeting in February 2001. During the first few meetings, the MSC identified several strengths of Main Street Andover as well as major obstacles to improving its role as an attractive, safe, welcoming place for both pedestrians and vehicles.

The MSC continued to meet throughout the Spring, Summer and Fall 2001, to review and comprehend the engineering plans that Design Consultants Inc., completed for the Massachusetts Highway's 25% Design Hearing.

On August 1, 2001 a letter of recommendation was sent to the Town Manager. This recommendation contained several considerations and focused primarily on the intersection of Elm Square. On September 7, 2001 a second letter containing several recommendations related to the north area of Main Street including the intersection of Stevens Street and Main Street was sent to the Town Manager. On December 5, 2001 a third letter was sent to the Town Manager. The letter contained recommendations voted on at the September 13, 2001, October 3, 2001 and November 27, 2001 meetings.

Throughout the town review process, DCI worked closely with both the MSC and MHD to resolve any and all outstanding issues. MHD concluded that the plans were sufficient to meet the 25% design requirements and as a result, set the 25% Design Public Hearing for January 9, 2002 at the Andover Public Library.

The 25% Design Public Hearing commenced at 7:10 p.m. with a public reading of the hearing advertisement and a full presentation by David Giangrande of the project. There was a comment, question, and answer session following the presentation. Overall the sentiment was positive and supportive of the project and the progress to date.

On March 5, 2002 the Main Street Committee sent a letter of recommendation to the Town Manager requesting ten items be included into the 75% plan revisions. On April 30, 2002, the Main Street Committee presented Article 48 to Town Meeting requesting \$269,500 for the restructuring of news racks, landscaping, and upgraded paving materials for the sidewalks and crosswalks. The reason for the request at Town Meeting is because the road improvement project will dramatically change Main Street. The Main Street Committee has developed a set of recommendations that will preserve Andover's charm and increase pedestrian safety. This is necessary for the revitalization of the center to create an esthetically cohesive downtown that honors Andover's rich history and provides a delightful, engaging place to do business reflecting the Vision of the Main Street Committee.

Shortly thereafter, DCI began working on the 75% plans. The Main Street Committee reviewed the 75% plans in July 2002 and had several additional questions, issues and concerns for the consultant to address before the 75% plan submission to MHD. The 75% plans, with DCI addressing most of the concerns were submitted to MHD in August 2002. It is expected that MHD will take approximately four to six months to review the plans.

In the meantime, the Main Street Committee is active researching and finalizing streetscape selections, including but not limited to decorative lighting, benches, trash receptacles, tree grates, etc... as well as landscaping design, signage and news rack solutions. Also, the Main Street Committee is pursuing alternative means of financing for some of the enhancements with grants, state funding, and private donations.

Main Street Committee current members: Clifford T. Markell, Chairperson, John C. Campbell, Ann E. Constantine, John R. Daher, Sheila M. Doherty, Karen M. Herman, Abigail O'Hara, John A. Simko, Judith F. Wright. Past members: Gerald Mulligan

Meetings are held usually once or twice per month and are posted in the Town Offices and are published in the Andover Townsman. The public is welcome to attend.